

REPORT

OF THE

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

THE General Conference of S. D. Adventists convened according to appointment at Battle Creek, Mich., May 20, 1863, at 6 P. M. The meeting was temporarily organized by choosing J. M. Aldrich, chairman, and U. Smith, secretary. The Conference was then opened by singing the hymn on page 233, and prayer by Bro. Snook. A committee to receive and judge of the credentials of delegates being called for, it was

Voted, That we have a committee of three on credentials.

The following brethren were thereupon chosen as that committee: Eld. J. N. Loughborough, of Mich., C. O. Taylor, of N. Y., and Isaac Sanborn, of Wis.

The remainder of this session was occupied in the presentation of credentials to the committee, and the meeting adjourned to the following morning, May 21, at 9 o'clock.

In the morning session, the committee announced the following brethren as the duly elected delegates from their respective States: From New York, Brn. J. N. Andrews, N. Fuller, C. O. Taylor, and J. M. Aldrich. From Ohio, I. N. Van Gorder. From Michigan, the ministers present from that State, namely, Brn. White, Bates, Waggoner, Byington, Loughborough, Hull, Cornell, and Lawrence, with a lay representation

of Brn. James Harvey, of North Liberty, Ind., and Wm. S. Higley, jr., of Lapeer, Mich. From Wisconsin, Isaac Sanborn. From Iowa, Brn. B. F. Snook, and W. H. Brinkerhoof. From Minnesota, Washington Morse.

The report of the committee was accepted.

Voted, That Bro. H. F. Baker be received as an additional delegate from Ohio.

The following brethren were then appointed a committee to draft a constitution and by-laws for the government of this Conference: Brn. J. N. Andrews, N. Fuller, I. Sanborn, W. Morse, H. F. Baker, B. F. Snook, J. H. Waggoner, and J. N. Loughborough. After due deliberation the committee presented the following constitution for the consideration of the Conference:

CONSTITUTION OF GENERAL CONFERENCE.

For the purpose of securing unity and efficiency in labor, and promoting the general interests of the cause of present truth, and of perfecting the organization of the Seventh-day Adventists, we, the delegates from the several State Conferences, hereby proceed to organize a General Conference, and adopt the following constitution for the government thereof:

Article I. This Conference shall be called the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Art. II. The officers of this Conference shall be a President, Secretary, Treasurer, and an Executive Committee of three, of whom the President shall be one.

Art. III. The duties of the President and Secretary shall be such respectively as usually pertain to those offices.

Art. IV. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to receive and disburse means under the direction of the Executive Committee, and keep an account of the same, and make a full report thereof to the regular meetings of the Conference.

Art. V. Section 1. It shall be the duty of the Executive Committee to take the general supervision of all ministerial labor, and see that the same is properly distributed; and they shall take the special supervision of all missionary labor, and as a missionary board shall have the power to decide where such labor is needed, and who shall go as missionaries to perform the same.

Sec. 2. Means for missionary operations may be received by donation from State Conferences, churches, or individuals; and the Committee are authorized to call for means when needed.

Sec. 3. When any State Conference desires ministerial labor from a minister not a resident within the bounds of such Conference, their request shall be made to the General Conference Executive Committee, and ministers sent by said Committee shall be considered under the jurisdiction of the Conf. Committee of such State: *Provided*, 1. That if such minister consider the State Committee inefficient, or their action so far wrong as to render his labor ineffectual, he may appeal to the General Conference Executive Committee: *Provided*, 2. That if such State Committee consider such minister inefficient they may appeal to the General Conference Committee, who shall decide on the matter of complaint, and take such action as they may think proper.

Art. VI. Each State Conference shall be entitled to one delegate in the General Conference, and one additional delegate for every twenty delegates in the State Conference, such delegates to the General Conference to be chosen by the State Conferences or their Committees: *Provided*, That the delegates to such State Conferences be elected according to the following ratio, to wit: Each church to the number of twenty members or under shall be entitled to one delegate, and one delegate for every additional fifteen members.

Art. VII. The officers shall hold their offices for the term of one year, and shall be elected at the regular meetings of the Conference.

Art. VIII. Sec. 1. The regular meetings of the Conference shall be held annually, and the time and

place of holding the same shall be determined by the Executive Committee, by whom due notice thereof shall be given through the Review.

Sec. 2. Special meetings may be called at the option of the Committee.

Art. IX. This constitution may be altered or amended by a two-thirds vote of the delegates present at any regular meeting: *Provided*, That any proposed amendment shall be communicated to the Executive Committee, and notice thereof given by them in their call for the meeting of the Conference.

The report was accepted and the committee discharged.

The Conference then took up the reported constitution item by item, for consideration and discussion, which resulted in its entire adoption.

The Conference being now ready for a permanent organization, it was

Voted, That a committee of three be appointed to nominate officers to act under the constitution already adopted.

Brn. Wm. S. Higley, Jas. Harvey, and B. F. Snook, were appointed as that committee.

Adjourned to 1 o'clock P. M.

Afternoon session. Prayer by Bro. Cornell. The committee on nominations reported as follows: For President, James White. Secretary, Uriah Smith. Treasurer, E. S. Walker. Executive Committee, James White, John Byington, J. N. Loughborough.

Report accepted and Committee discharged.

On motion the Conference proceeded to vote on the nominations presented. Bro. White was unanimously chosen President, but declined to serve. Eld. John Byington was then elected as President in his stead. The nominations for Secretary and Treasurer were then ratified. J. N. Andrews and G. W. Amadon

were chosen as the remaining members of the Executive Committee. On motion of Bro. Loughborough it was

Voted, That, as one object of the General Conference is to secure uniformity of action throughout all the States, a committee of five be appointed to draw up a constitution for State Conferences, to be recommended to the brethren in the different States, that there may be uniformity in the matter of State Conferences. The following brethren were then chosen as that committee: Brn. Sanborn, of Wis., Brinkerhoof, of Iowa, Aldrich, of N. Y., Loughborough, of Michigan, and Morse, of Minnesota. On motion of Bro. Waggoner it was

Voted, That this Conference recommend to the Publishing Association to publish a new prophetic chart.

Voted, That we recommend to the Publishing Association to publish a chart of the ten commandments, suitable for public lectures.

Adjourned to evening after the Sabbath, at half-past seven.

Met again according to adjournment. Prayer by Bro. Andrews. The committee appointed to draft a constitution for State Conferences, reported through its chairman, J. N. Loughborough, the form of a constitution for the consideration of the Conference. This was examined item by item, and after full discussion it was

Voted, That this Conference recommend the following form of constitution to the different State Conferences:

CONSTITUTION FOR STATE CONFERENCES.

Whereas, We have before us the great work of disseminating light upon the commandments of God, the faith of Jesus, and the truths connected with the third angel's message; and

Whereas, Order, union, and concentration of action in the dissemination of these truths is of the utmost importance, therefore

Resolved, That we adopt the following constitution, as recommended by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, assembled at Battle Creek, Mich., May 20, 1863.

Art. I. Sec. 1. This Conference shall be known as the ——— Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and shall be composed of all ministers in good standing and delegates from organized churches within its limits.

Art. II. Sec. 1. The officers of this Conference shall be a President, Secretary, Treasurer, and an Executive Committee of three, of whom the President shall be one; and they shall be elected annually.

Sec. 2. The duties of the President and Secretary shall be such as usually pertain to those offices respectively.

Sec. 3. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to keep an account of the receipts and disbursements of the Conference funds,—to pay out the same under the directions of the Executive Committee, and to make an annual report thereof at the regular meetings of the Conference.

Sec. 4. It shall be the duty of the Executive Committee to appoint through the Review the time and place of the annual Conferences, and to call special Conferences, whenever in their judgment it may be needful so to do: to call on the churches and scattered brethren for means when needed, and to disburse the same; to take the general supervision of all tent operations, and property belonging to the Conference; to audit and settle accounts with ministers and others

in the employ of the Conference, and to exercise a general watch-care over all matters pertaining to the interests of the cause within the bounds of the Conference.

Art. III. Sec. 1. Conference funds shall be raised from the proceeds of Systematic Benevolence, and by gifts and donations.

Sec. 2. We recommend that all churches belonging to this Conference adopt the plan of Systematic Benevolence on the tithing principle, as set forth on the first page of our S. B. books.

Sec. 3. The churches and scattered brethren within the bounds of this Conference will be expected to pledge to the Executive Committee the amount that they will give each month during the Conference year, for the support of the ministers and tent operations, and for such other purposes as may be necessary for the advancement of the cause; said sums to be paid to the Treasurer monthly, when convenient so to do; or at the commencement of every quarter; viz., on the first of April, July, October, and January; except when it be preferable to give it, or a portion of it, directly to preachers who labor among them.

Sec. 4. The churches will be expected to make a report to the Secretary at the end of each quarter, of the amount they have sent to the Treasurer, or paid to preachers, during such quarter.

Sec. 5. It shall be the duty of ministers to report to the Secretary at the end of each quarter the amount they have received and expended during such quarter, and at the end of each year they shall make a *written* report to the regular meetings of the Conference of the entire amount of their receipts and expenditures during such Conference year.

Art. IV. Sec. 1. When any church or scattered brethren wish ministerial labor in their vicinity, their call shall be made to the Executive Committee.

Sec. 2. It shall be the duty of the churches in this Conference to send a written report to the regular meetings of the Conference of their standing, their losses, and additions during the year, also the yearly amount of their s. b. fund.

Art. V. Sec. 1. It shall be the duty of the Conference to determine who are the approved ministers within the bounds thereof, to grant suitable credentials to the same at each regular meeting; and during the interval of such meeting the Executive Committee shall perform such duties.

Sec. 2. Those who feel it their duty to improve their gifts as messengers or preachers, shall first lay their exercises of mind before the Conference Committee, to receive a license from them, if the Committee consider them qualified.

Art. VI. Sec. 1. It shall be the duty of the ministers of this Conference to make a *written* report to each annual meeting thereof, of their labors each week during the Conference year.

Art. VII. Sec. 1. The delegates to this Conference shall be elected according to the following ratio; Each church to the number of twenty members or under shall be entitled to one delegate, and one delegate for every additional fifteen members.

Sec. 2. In case all the delegates to which any church is entitled do not attend the Conference, the delegates attending may cast the full number of votes to which said church is entitled.

Art. VIII. Sec. 1. This Constitution may be amended at any regular meeting of the Conference by a two-

thirds vote of the members present, *provided* such amendment shall not conflict with the constitution of the General Conference.

Voted, That this Conference issue a pamphlet containing the minutes of this Conference, together with the address on organization, issued by the Battle Creek Conference of Oct. 5 and 6, 1861; also that the minutes of this Conference be published in the Review.

Voted, That we recommend State Conferences to publish in pamphlet form the minutes of their proceedings, and distribute to their churches.

Adjourned *sine die*.

JOHN BYINGTON, *Chairman*,
U. SMITH, *Secretary*.

Conference Address.

ORGANIZATION.

Of the necessity of church organization at this late period in the discussion of this subject, it is unnecessary for us to speak. That division of the subject which has been especially referred to us embraces the following points: 1. Manner of organizing a church: 2. Officers and their duties: 3. The reception of members; and 4. Letters of commendation.

Where bodies of believers are brought out on the truth in new places we would not recommend the immediate formation of a church. In such cases let a leader be appointed [this can perhaps best be done by the evangelist when he raises up the church], and let social meetings be continued till such time as the individuals become thoroughly acquainted with each other, and ascertain with whom they can have fellowship, and who are qualified for the important duties of of-

ficers of the church. As to the particular manner of organizing a church, when the proper time comes, we shall be allowed to avail ourselves of the experience of several ministers who have already adopted the following plan, and testify that it works well:

Let the minister request all those who propose to enter into church order, to stand upon their feet till it is ascertained whether perfect fellowship exists among them. If it does not, let those between whom the difficulty lies, immediately retire and confer together in order to an understanding. If this cannot be arrived at, we know of no other way but that the accused should remain outside until the church is prepared to take action in his or her case. It having been ascertained who are prepared to enter into church fellowship, let their names be attached to the following church covenant:

We, the undersigned, hereby associate ourselves together, as a church, taking the name, Seventh-day Adventists, covenanting to keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus Christ.

The members being thus enrolled, they are prepared for the election of

CHURCH OFFICERS.

The following classes of rulers, and officers of the Christian church are brought to view in the New Testament: Apostles, Evangelists, Elders, Bishops, Pastors, and Deacons. These we would divide into two great classes: Those who hold their office by virtue of an especial call from God, and those selected by the church: the former embracing apostles and evangelists; and the latter elders, bishops, pastors, and deacons.

1. Apostles. Apostle is from the word, *apostolos*, and signifies, one sent forth, a messenger. It is used to designate in a pre-eminent sense the twelve apostles sent out by Christ; but it cannot be confined to them nor to that age.

1. It cannot be confined to the twelve. Christ was called an apostle. Heb. iii, 1. Paul and Barnabas were called apostles. Acts xiv, 4, 14. Titus and other brethren were called messengers (Greek, apostles). 2 Cor. viii, 22, 23. [The word *of* in verse 23, is from the original, *hyper*, and signifies, *about, concerning*]. Epaphroditus was called a messenger [Greek, apostle]. Phil. ii, 25. Here we have at least four apostles besides the twelve, all living in the same age with them; which shows that the idea of perpetuating just twelve apostles in the church, as the Mormons and Irvingites hold, is unscriptural and absurd.

2. They cannot be confined to the times covered by the New Testament record. First. The definition of the word apostle, being, one sent out, it follows that any one especially sent out of God in any age to proclaim his truth, is, in that sense, an apostle. We think it more especially applicable to those who are called of God to lead out in any new truth or reform; such, for instance, as Luther, Melancthon, Wesley, and William Miller. Second. The Scriptures also show that apostles are to be perpetuated in the church. Eph. iv, 11-13. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; *till* we all come into the unity of the faith." This testimony shows that the office of apostle runs co-extensive with that of pastors and teachers, and

other spiritual gifts, and is to last till the church, the body of Christ, all come into the unity of the faith.

II. Evangelists. This term is from the Greek, *euangelistes*, and is thus defined by Robinson, "Properly, a messenger of good tidings. In the New Testament, an evangelist, a preacher of the gospel, not fixed in any place, but traveling as a missionary to preach the gospel, and establish churches. See Acts xxi, 8; Eph. iv, 11; 2 Tim. iv, 5."

We come now to the second class, those appointed by the church, namely, elders, bishops, pastors, and deacons.

1. Elders. This office is also expressed by the words bishop, pastor, and overseer. To show that these are interchangeable terms for the same thing, we refer, first, to Titus i, 5, 7, "For this cause left I thee in Crete that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee; *for a bishop* must be blameless," &c. The word elder, in verse 5, is from, *presbuteros*, and signifies, primarily, according to Robinson, an elder person, a senior; as an officer of the church, it signifies the elders of Christian churches, presbyters, to whom was committed the direction and government of individual churches; properly, the same as, *episkopos*, which see." The word rendered bishop in verse 7, is from this word, *episkopos*, and is defined by the same author as follows, "In the New Testament spoken of officers of the primitive churches, an overseer, superintendent. This was originally simply the common Greek name of office equivalent to *presbuteros*, which latter was a Jewish term." That elders and bishops are identical, is also shown from Acts xx, 17, 28. The

word elders in verse 17, is from, *presbuteros*, and the word overseers, in 28, is from, *episkopos* (bishop). The term pastor is from, *poimen*, and signifies, literally, a herdsman, a shepherd; specially, a pastor, a teacher, a spiritual guide of a particular church. The definition of this term shows that it signifies the same office as *presbuteros* (elder), and *episkopos* (bishop), a local office, confined to a particular church.

2. Deacons. This term is from the Greek, *diakonos*, and is defined to signify primarily, "a waiter, an attendant, a servant, usually derived from *dia* and *konis*, one dusty from running. An officer in the primitive church, one who had charge of the alms and money of the church, an overseer of the sick and poor, an almoner. Phil. i, 1; 1 Tim. iii, 8, 12; Acts vi, 1-6. Also of a female, *he diakonos*, who had charge of the female sick and poor. Rom. xvi, 1."

From what has been said, it will be seen that the officers of the church which are appointed solely by the church itself are reduced to two, namely, elders and deacons. From what then has arisen so much confusion upon this subject? It must be from the fact that the different names of elder, bishop, and pastor are applied to the same office, and also from overlooking the principle that a person holding any one of the higher offices is qualified to officiate in any of the lower; and when performing the duties of such office is called by the title applying thereto. Thus Peter, though an apostle, calls himself an elder [1 Pet. v, 1], and Paul, carrying the liberalities of the brethren up to Jerusalem [Acts xi, 30], might with equal propriety be called a deacon. In 2 Cor. viii, 4, he is spoken of as performing the office of a deacon. The brethren prayed him to take upon himself the fellowship of the

ministering [Greek *diakonias*, deaconship] to the saints; which he did. Verses 19, 20. Evangelists, also, are called elders. Paul says to Timothy, "Let the elders that rule well be accounted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in word and doctrine." 1 Tim. v, 17. Here were some laboring in word and doctrine who are called elders; but such labor shows them to be evangelists, it being especially their work; hence evangelists are sometimes called elders; but only, of course, when acting in that capacity.

If this principle be correct, we may lay down the following general rule: That no person by virtue of a lower office can fill a higher one; but any one filling a higher office, can by virtue of that office, act in any of the lower. Thus, a deacon cannot by virtue of his deaconship, act as an elder, nor an elder as an evangelist, nor an evangelist as an apostle; but an apostle can act as an evangelist, elder or deacon; an evangelist, as an elder or deacon; and an elder as a deacon. We do not here speak of apostles and evangelists as officers of individual churches; for this is not the position they occupy: their calling makes it necessary for them to move in a wider sphere; namely, to have, if apostles, the oversight of the churches, and if evangelists, to labor to raise up churches in new fields. These, in our judgment, are the only officers qualified to organize churches.

We give it as the result of our examination of this subject that in the organization of a church, officers are to be supplied according to the necessities of the case. We understand the duties of a deacon to be confined exclusively to the temporal matters of the church; such, for instance, as taking charge of its finances, making preparation for the celebration of the

ordinances, &c.; while it is the duty of the elder to take the lead and oversight of the church in spiritual things. This elder need not necessarily be a preacher, but may conduct the meetings of the church, and administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper in the absence of any higher officer. If an apostle or evangelist should be present, all these duties would be left with him.

Where a church is so small that the duties of both an elder and a deacon can be conveniently performed by the same individual, we see no necessity of having more than one officer. Let this one be an elder, who as we have already shown is qualified by virtue of his office to act also as a deacon. But if the church is so large that its temporal and spiritual wants cannot be attended to by one person, let one or more deacons be chosen to look after its temporal affairs, while the elder or elders confine themselves to its spiritual interests.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS.

When the names of the members are enrolled as specified in the former part of this article, let the minister read to them the scriptures setting forth the qualifications requisite to the offices of elder and deacon (these are described in 1 Tim. iii, 1-10; Titus i, 6-9); and then let the minister select two brethren of good judgment who with him shall act as a nominating committee to nominate candidates for elder and deacon. Then the church may be called upon to vote by uplifted hand whether they will sanction said nomination or not. If said nomination is ratified by a three-fourths vote of those enrolled, they shall be ordained to such office, provided those not voting present no valid objection against their filling such offices. Then let the minister ordain them as in Acts vi, 6; Titus i, 5. We

need hardly suggest the necessity of every church keeping a record of all its proceedings. To this end a clerk will be necessary, who may be elected in the same manner. The elder of a church should act as a chairman in all its business meetings.

RECEPTION OF MEMBERS.

Let all candidates for admission into the church after its organization, be received by a unanimous vote of the church, unless the opposition to their admission comes from those who are at the time subjects of labor, or under the censure of the church.

LETTERS OF COMMENDATION.

That the churches in different places may not be imposed upon by false brethren coming into their midst, to whom they are strangers, it seems necessary that brethren moving from place to place, should carry letters of commendation from the church with which they were last connected. As a form of such letter of commendation we suggest the following:

This is to certify that _____ is a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church of _____, in good standing, and one whom we can recommend to the brethren where his (or her) lot may be cast.

By order of the church at _____,
_____, *Church Clerk.*

This step we regard as strictly in accordance with Rom. xvi, 1; 2 Cor. iii.

All which is prayerfully submitted in behalf of the ministers of the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

J. N. LOUGHBOROUGH,
MOSES HULL,
M. E. CORNELL.

Religious Societies.

BEING instructed by the Michigan State Conference, at its session of May 22, 1863, to prepare a pamphlet for the churches in Michigan and Indiana, setting forth the necessary legal steps to be taken in securing meeting-house property, with an abstract of the laws relating to wills, &c., I have complied with said instruction and offer the following as the result. I will first introduce those sections of the law which have a bearing upon the subject, and shall in subsequent portions of the pamphlet merely refer to those parts of the law which are applicable to the case in hand.

J. N. LOUGHBOROUGH.

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Abstract of the Laws of Michigan Relative to the Organization and Control of Religious Societies.

SEC. 1. The people of the State of Michigan enact, That section two of an act entitled, "An act concerning churches and religious societies, establishing uniform rules for the acquisition, tenure, control, and disposition of property conveyed or dedicated for religious purposes, and to repeal chapter fifty-two of the revised statutes," approved February thirteenth, eighteen hundred and fifty-five, be and the same is hereby amended so as to read as follows:

SEC. 2. It shall be lawful for any number of persons of full age, not less than five, who may be desirous of forming themselves into a church, congregation,